SANTA FE RAILROAD, GRAIN ELEVATOR
I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor
On Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad slip,
South side of Sanitary and Ship Canal
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

HAER No. IL-75

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HAER
ILL
16-CHIG,
155-

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

SANTA FE RAILROAD, GRAIN ELEVATOR
I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor

HAER No. IL-75

Location:	I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor On Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad Slip, south side of Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, east of South Damen Avenue, north of the Stevenson Expressway Chicago, Cook County, Illinois UTM: 16 E.444100 N.4632120 Quad: Englewood
Date of Construction:	1906
Builder:	John S. Metcalf Company
Present Status:	Abandoned
Significance:	This large grain processing complex was built in 1906 with a 400,000 bushel capacity and accommodation for 360 railroad cars. After a fire in 1832, the site was rebuilt with reinforced concrete silos.
Project Information:	The Illinois and Michigan Canal was designated a National Heritage Corridor in 1984. The following year HABS/HAER embarked on an extensive inventory and documentation project of the 100 mile-long corridor. Field work for this project was concluded in 1988. Final editing of the documentation was completed in 1992.
Historians:	Charles Scott, Frances Alexander, and John Nicolay, 1986.

The John S. Metcalf Company, consulting engineers, designed and built this facility for the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad in 1906. The original complex included a powerhouse, elevator with temporary storage and processing silos, and thirty-five grain storage silos. With a 400,000 bushel capacity, this complex could accommodate sixty railroad cars at the elevator and 300 railroad cars at a yard a short distance away. Equipment at the site included two driers, bleachers, oat clippers, cleaners, scourers and dust packers. Using filtered water from the adjacent South Branch of the Chicago River, boilers with a total of 1,500 horsepower generated the steam and electricity required by the machinery. The thirty-five grain silos south of this facility had a total capacity of one million bushels. In 1932, a grain dust explosion ignited a fire which destroyed the original timber and brick building. The Atchison Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad rebuilt the concrete processing house with fourteen reinforced concrete silos; the capacity of the facility was increased to 1,700,000 bushels. After reconstruction, the railroad leased the facility to the Stratton Grain Company. The complex is currently abandoned.

This site contains several buildings, including a grain processing and storage building plus the grain elevator. At the western end of the site is a two-story brick powerhouse, measuring 100' x 40'. This building has a concrete foundation, brick walls and pilasters, and corbeled brick cornice. The powerhouse also has a low-pitched gable roof and brick segmental arches spanning the window openings. All windows have been filled with brick, wood, or corrugated metal. Adjacent to the powerhouse is a brick chimney 165' tall. Attached to the east side of the powerhouse is the Hess dryer house, a 40' x 25' brick building, joining the powerhouse and grain processing elevator. The elevator house is a brick, timber frame, and corrugated steel sided structure, 225' long and 56' wide. The south elevation is two stories tall and the rear is three stories tall. Mechanical works (including bleachers) are located on roof. The elevator is of reinforced concrete, 165' high and about 50' square, and sits above two tracks and a grain unloading hopper. Chutes run from the elevator to the railroad tracks and to the Hess dryer house. The elevator contains numerous multi-light windows, many of which are broken out. Silos attached to the elevator are for receiving, shipping, and processing.

South of the railroad tracks is a corrugated-metal shed containing a modern rotary car dump. South of the car dump is the grain silo storage annex with thirty-five silos. Each concrete silo is 23' in diameter and 100' in height. A conveyor, housed in a steel truss bridge with corrugated metal siding,

crosses the railroad sidings and connects the elevator silos to the storage silos. Several small auxiliary buildings are at the east end of the site, including a small one-story office building, a one-story machine shop, and a one-story railroad repair shop. All of these buildings are constructed of brick.

SOURCES:

Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors and U. S. Shipping Board, Bureau of Operations, Transportation on the Great Lakes (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1926, 1930, and 1937 editions).

"New Grain Elevator for the Santa Fe System at Chicago," The Railway Age (March 23, 1906): 408-10.

State of Illinois, Division of Waterways, Seventeenth Annual Report, 1933-1934.

"The Handling and Storage of Our Huge Grain Crop," Scientific American (December 11, 1909): 444-45, 451.